



Saguaro National Park News Release

14-49

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CREWS PREPARE FOR INCREASED FIRE ACTIVITY DUE TO DRIER WEATHER FORECAST

Tucson, AZ – The lightning-ignited Deer Head Fire burning in the Rincon Mountains of Saguaro National Park is approximately 320 acres. This figure is an estimate based on GPS data from a helicopter flight late Saturday afternoon and visual estimates from firefighters on the ground. Fire behavior the past two days has been mild, due to high humidity and cooler overnight temperatures. Rain events over last two days have produced only a small amount of precipitation on the fire and fire activity likely will increase later this week as drier weather is predicted to return.

Firefighters are tying in unburnable rock outcroppings with hand ignitions to create buffer zone and reinforce the fire line. These actions will provide safety zones for firefighters, confine the fire's spread, and protect sensitive wildlife habitat. Fire managers continue to monitor the fire and have plans in place to protect Manning Camp, should the fire move that way.

The fire is being managed to allow its natural role in the wilderness, clearing pine needles, leaves, grass, downed logs, and shrubs. Most of the large trees, especially the fire-adapted ponderosa pine, will survive. In places, fire may move into the tree tops, killing some trees, which will be replaced by new plant growth that thrives in increased light. A variety of fires on the landscape over time results in a mosaic of burned and unburned vegetation that creates diverse habitat for wildlife. After a fire, the forest is reborn in the nutrient rich- ash that fertilizes the soil.

As the fire continues to progress, it will vary in intensity, spread and duration with variations in topography, vegetation, and weather. While fire may continue to gradually grow for a few days or weeks until the area receives significant precipitation, it will begin to lose intensity as it reaches natural boundaries and burns into areas that have previously burned. Rincon Mountain District backcountry closures will remain in effect for the duration of the fire to ensure public safety.

Smoke may be visible from Tucson, Vail, Benson and the surrounding area at times. It may occasionally settle in the east side of Tucson when air temperatures cool at night and in the early morning hours, but usually lifts during the day. Periodic low to moderate intensity wildfires prevent heavy fuel accumulation that would send a larger amount of smoke into the air for a longer duration should a large, uncontrolled wildfire occur in the future.

For additional information please visit <http://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/3999/>, <http://Facebook.com/SaguaroNationalPark> or call the Fire Information Hotline at (520) 733-5150.